# Intriguing CSA episode

The interesting article by Fred L. Reed III in *Coin World* of Oct. 4 and Oct. 11, 1989, on the 1861 copper-nickel Confederate States of America cent has encouraged me to express some additional thoughts.

The theory there advanced that the 1861 Confederate cent is a fantasy or imaginative creation prepared in 1874 means that John W. Haseltine and J. Calvin Randall, well-known professional numismatists, hired Robert Lovett Jr., a successful token and medal manufacturer, to cut and predate dies and to strike as an "original" issue 12 copper-nickel pieces from them. In the alternative, Lovett might have been a partner in the alleged deceptive adventure or a fellow conniver. This theory is similar to what actually happened in the 1804 U.S. dollar scandal.

When the Haseltine-Randall advertisement was printed in April 1874, only four of the 12 copper-nickel originals remained unsold at a price of $20 each. That advertisement, however, offered seven restrikes in gold at $30 each, 12 restrikes in silver at $15 each, and 55 restrikes in copper at $4 each. What self-respecting deceivers would produce and advertise "restrikes" for sale simultaneously with what they stated were "originals" if the dies were false? Sound judgment indicates that they would ask a higher price for or strike more of the "originals" and not mention "restrikes" at all. Haseltine by his deceptive actions as to the 1804 U.S. dollar may have disqualified himself from canonization or sainthood, but he was loyal enough to himself not to self-destruct by promptly issuing "restrikes" from any false Confederate dies he had developed.

Assuming falsity of the dies, why would a faker make only a few "originals" in copper-nickel and many "restrikes" in other metals when copper-nickel metal was readily available in the then circulating United States cents dated from 1857 through 1864?

If we put ourselves in Lovett's position under the falsity theory, we wonder why Lovett would put his initial L in a false die as that could easily identify him as a culprit. Why would Lovett have devoted such artistic and creative talent in cutting beautiful new dies in 1874 if he knew he was only making a predated fake? Lovett would also have to find his female head punch in choice condition since he had first used it in 1861 in making Civil War token dies. Thus, Lovett's involvement in faking just doesn't seem to have any logical basis.

Assuming falsity of the dies, Robert Bashlow would turn over in his grave if, after all the effort he exerted in 1961-62 to legitimize the thick Confederate cent restrikes he had made and sold, it turned out that he had given birth to pure-blooded fakes instead of transfer die fakes. Then even the Smithsonian Institution to whom Bashlow gave the "original" Confederate cent dies would have another set of fakes on its hands to contend with.

Assuming die legitimacy, the fact that the restrikes were made in other metals than the originals would indicate that the restrikers wanted to be upright and avoid any confusion between the restrikes and the originals as stated in their advertisement.

Until there are facts to support a theory of falsity, I believe we should accept the advertisement's statements as generally true.

Whether Lovett was asked informally in 1861 to make Confederate 1-cent dies or did it as a potential sales opportunity without being asked, the copper-nickel Confederate cents are 1861 patterns intended for circulation in or by the Confederacy nevertheless. Assuming that Lovett made the dies in 1861, he, as a northerner, was not at that time concerned about putting his initials on the reverse die. He only produced a few trial pieces and later made no more either because, one, he did not obtain an official order for any coinage or, two, he did not obtain a buyer to use them for token circulation or, three, he became fearful of disloyalty. Arlie Slabaugh in *Coin World* of Dec. 6, 1989, seems to feel as I do.

This episode shows how intriguing numismatic problems can be.

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